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Sermon
on the
Duties and Advantages
of affording instruction
to the
Deaf and Dumb.

By Thos. H. Gallaudet



*For Mr. Lewis Todd
from his friend
the author—*

SERMON, 27815

ON THE

DUTY AND ADVANTAGES

OF

Affording Instruction

TO THE

DEAF AND DUMB.

BY THOMAS H. GALLAUDET,

Principal of the American Asylum at Hartford, Conn. for the Education of the
Deaf and Dumb.

CONCORD:

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NOTE.—The following **SERMON** was delivered at Burlington and Montpelier, Vermont ; Portland, Maine ; and Concord, New-Hampshire ; during an excursion of the author, the object of which was, not to solicit pecuniary contributions, but to excite in the public mind a deeper interest than has hitherto been felt for the **DEAF AND DUMB** ;—and is now published at the request of the Governor of Maine, and other gentlemen in Portland and Concord.—Whatever may be derived from the sale of the Sermon, after defraying the expense of publication, will be applied to the support of indigent pupils, at the Asylum, from the States in which copies of the Sermon may be sold.

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SERMON.

ROMANS, XV. 21.

"BUT, AS IT IS WRITTEN, TO WHOM HE WAS NOT SPOKEN OF, THEY SHALL SEE; AND THEY THAT HAVE NOT HEARD, SHALL UNDERSTAND."

PROPHECY inspires the Christian with courage in the cause of his Divine Master. Its accomplishment assures him that the Lord is on his side.

The former is like the dawning of an effulgent morn on the eye of the indefatigable traveller, cheering him with the promise of alacrity and vigour on his way. The latter is the full-orbed splendour of the noon-day sun, illuminating the region he has left, and yielding him a bright retrospect of the course which has thus far brought him so successfully on his pilgrimage. Such a resolution animated, such a hope gladdened, the breast of Paul, the faithful, the intrepid servant of Jesus Christ. He was sent to preach to the Gentiles. He took courage from the declarations of prophecy. He witnessed its accomplishment; and this furnished him with abundant support and consolation in his laborious and perilous service.

"For I will not dare to speak," says he, "of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed. Yea, so have I striv-

ed to preach, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: But, as it is written, to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard, shall understand."

While contemplating this generous ardour of the apostle, let us consider his example most worthy of the imitation of us all. And would to God, my brethren, that his spirit were transfused into the breasts of all the disciples of Jesus Christ; for never, perhaps, in any period of the history of the Church, has she stretched forth her hands, with more eagerness of supplication, for the undaunted and vigorous exertions, in her behalf, of all who delight in her prosperity.

Now her walls begin to rise, and her towers to lift their heads towards heaven; for many have come up to her help. Let not our hands refuse their labour in so glorious a work; for soon she shall shine forth in all the strength and splendour of the New Jerusalem, becoming the joy and the praise of the whole earth.

Paul toiled for her prosperity. The Gentiles arrested his attention and shared his labours. And his labours derived fresh vigour from the declarations and accomplishment of prophecy.

If we, my brethren, have the spirit of Paul, the *heathen* of our day will not be neglected by us; and *prophecy* will become to us, also, an abundant source of encouragement, that we shall not spend our strength among them for naught. These two simple truths form the whole plan of my discourse.

But who are the heathen? My heart sinks within me while giving the reply. Millions, millions of your fellow men. Europe, Asia, Africa, and America contain a melancholy host of immortal souls who are still enveloped with the midnight gloom of ignorance and superstition.

They who adore the idol which their own hands have formed; who worship the orbs of heaven; who sacrifice their own flesh to a vindictive Deity; who bathe in the stream, or who pass through the fire, to purify themselves from sin; who hope to gain paradise by practising the most cruel bodily austerities; who bid the widow burn on the funeral pile of her deceased husband, while her own offspring lights its flames; who sing their profane incantations, and revel in brutish madness during their nightly orgies, at the instigation of some miserable wretch, claiming the name of wizard or magician; who never heard of that Name, the only one given under heaven by which man can be saved. These are some of the heathen.

Who are the heathen? I direct your observation nearer home. I point you to thousands within your own country, and villages, and towns, and cities, who have grown up, in this favored land, without any correct knowledge of the God who made them; of the Saviour who died to redeem all who trust in Him; of the Spirit which is given to sanctify the heart; of the Book of Eternal Life, which unfolds to us all that can alarm our fears or animate our hopes with regard to a future world.—These are some of the heathen.

But are there still other heathen? Yes, my brethren, and I present them to the eye of your pity, an interesting, an affecting group of your fellow men;—of those who are bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh; who live encircled with all that can render life desirable; in the midst of society, of knowledge, of the arts, of the sciences, of a free and happy government, of a widely-preached gospel; and yet who know nothing of all these blessings; who regard them with amazement and a trembling concern; who are lost in one perpetual gaze of wonder at the thousand mysteries which surround them; who consider many of our most simple customs as perplexing enigmas, who often make the most absurd conjectures respecting the weighty transactions of civil society, or the august and solemn rites and ceremonies of religion; who propose a thousand enquiries which cannot be answered, and pant for a deliverance which has not yet been afforded them.

These are some of the heathen;—long-neglected heathen;—the poor Deaf and Dumb, whose sad necessities have been forgotten, while scarce a corner of the world has not been searched to find those who are yet ignorant of Jesus Christ.

Has the tear of pity bedewed your cheek, while perusing the terrific history of *Juggernaut*, rolling, with infernal pomp, his blood-stained car over the expiring victims of a superstition which surpasses all others in its impure and cruel rites? Do you sympathize with the missionary who has taken his life in his hand

and has gone to fight the battles of the cross against these powers of darkness? Do you contribute your alms, and offer up your prayers, for the success of the enterprise in which he has embarked?

Do you greet with the smile of welcome, and the kindest offices of friendship, the savage islanders whom Providence has cast upon our shores? Do you provide for their wants, and dispel, by the beams of gospel truth, the thick darkness which has, heretofore, shrouded their understandings? Do you make them acquainted with the name of Jesus, and open to them the prospect, through His merits, of a bright and happy immortality?

May the Lord reward you abundantly for these labours of love. Prosecute with still more ardour such efforts in the cause of Christ. Fan this missionary flame, until it shall burn in every christian breast, and warm and invigorate the thousands whose bosoms glow with united zeal to diffuse the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ," to those who still sit in the vast and remote regions of the shadow of death.

Far be it from my purpose to divert your charities from so noble an object. Palsied be the hand that attempts to build up one part of the walls of the spiritual Jerusalem by prostrating another in ruins. I would not draw forth your sympathy in behalf of one project of benevolence by decrying others. I will not impeach the sincerity of your exertions to enlarge the extent of the Redeemer's kingdom throughout the world, by telling you

that Charity begins at home ; that we have heathen enough in our own land ; that we had better give the gospel to our own countrymen, before we exhaust our resources upon those whom an ocean divides from us.

No, my brethren, I hold a very different language. I only put in a claim for *one portion* of the heathen. I only ask that the same stream of a diffusive benevolence which, fed by a thousand springs of private liberality, is rolling its mighty and fertilizing tide over the dreary deserts of ignorance and superstition, and sin that lie in the *other* hemisphere, may afford one small rivulet to refresh and cheer a little barren spot in our *native land*, which has hitherto lain forgotten, thirsty, desolate. I only crave a cup of consolation, for the Deaf and Dumb, from the same fountain at which the Hindoo, the African, and the Savage, is beginning to draw the water of eternal life.

Do you enquire if the Deaf and Dumb truly deserve to be ranked among the heathen ? With regard to their vices they surely do not ; for a kind Providence, who always tempers the wind to the shorn lambs of the flock, has given to the condition of these unfortunates many benefits. Possessing indeed the general traits of our common fallen nature, and subject to the same irregular propensities and desires which mark the depraved character of man, they have, nevertheless, been defended, by the very imprisonment of their minds, against much of the contagion of bad example ; against the scandal, the abuse, the false-

hood, the profanity, and the blasphemy, which their ears cannot hear nor their tongues utter. Cruel is that hand which would lead them into the paths of sin ; base, beyond description, that wretch who would seduce them, by his guileful arts, into the haunts of guilt and ruin. Thus, they have been kept, by the restraining grace of God, from much of the evil that is in the world.

Yet they need the same grace, as all of us need it, to enlighten the dark places of their understandings, and to mould their hearts into a conformity to the Divine Image ; they require too an interest in that Saviour who was lifted up, that he might draw all men unto Him.

I tread not upon dangerous ground, when I lay down this position ; that if it is our duty to instil divine truth into the minds of children as soon as they are able to receive it ; if we are bound by the injunction of Christ to convey the glad news of salvation to every creature under heaven ; then we fail to obey this injunction, if we neglect to make His name known to the poor Deaf and Dumb.

I have said that they are heathen. Truly they are so as it regards their knowledge of religious truth. The experience of more than seven years familiar acquaintance with some of the most intelligent among them, has fully satisfied my mind, that, without instruction, they must inevitably remain ignorant of the most simple truths, even of what is termed Natural religion, and of all those doctrines of Revealed religion, which must be the

foundation of our hopes with regard to our eternal destiny.

I have seen the affecting spectacle of an immortal spirit, exhibiting the possession of every energy of thought and feeling which mark the most exalted of our species ; inhabiting a body arrived to its age of full and blooming maturity ; speaking through an eye, whose piercing lustre beamed with intelligence and sparkled with joy at the acquisition of a single new idea ;—I have seen such a spirit, oh ! it was a melancholy sight, earnestly contemplate

“ the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields ;
The warbling woodland ; the resounding shore ;
The pomp of groves and garniture of fields ;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds ;
And all that echoes to the song of even ;
All that the mountain’s sheltering bosom shields ;
And all the dread magnificence of heaven ;”

—while such an amphitheatre of beauty, and order, and splendour, raised not in this mind which viewed it the notion of an Almighty Hand that formed and sustained the whole.

I have asked such an one, after a few glimmerings of truth had begun to dissipate the mental darkness in which it had been shrouded, what were its meditations at the sight of a friend on whom death had laid his icy hand, and whom the grave was about to receive into its cold and silent mansion.—“ I thought I saw,” was the reply, “ the termination of being ; the destruction of all that constituted man. I had no notion of any existence beyond the grave. I knew not that there was a God who created and governs the world. I felt no ac-

countability to Him. My whole soul was engrossed with the gratification of my sensual appetites ; with the decorations of dress ; the amusement of pleasure ; or the anticipations of accumulating wealth, and living in gaiety and splendour."

✓ I have seen, it was a vision of delight, the same spirit, when it first received the notion of the Great Creator of the universe. I dare not attempt to describe its emotions, at such an interesting moment. For I believe, my brethren, it is impossible for us, who have grown up in the midst of a christian people, and who were taught in our tenderest years the being and attributes of God, to form any just estimate of the astonishment, the awe, and the delight, which the first conception of an invisible, immaterial, omnipotent, omniscient, and infinitely wise, just, benevolent and holy Being, is calculated to inspire, when it breaks in upon a mind, that in the range of all its former thoughts, had never once conjectured that there was a Maker of this visible creation.

With what mingled emotions of wonder and rapture must the bosom of Columbus have been agitated, when the new hemisphere burst upon his view ; opening to his imagination its boundless stores of beauty, wealth, and plenty. And yet how does such an event, magnificent and sublime, indeed, compared with all sublunary affairs, dwindle into insignificance, when contrasted with the first conception that an immortal mind is led to form, not of a new world—but of the God who created all worlds.

I have seen the same spirit agitated with fearful solicitude at the prospect of meeting that God, at whose bar it was taught, we must all appear;—and anxiously enquiring what must be done to secure the favour of so pure and holy an Intelligence.

I have seen the same spirit bowed beneath a sense of sin, and casting itself upon the mercy of God through a Redeemer whose character and offices it had just begun to understand. And I have seen it, as I fondly trust, consoled and soothed and gladdened with the hope of an interest in Jesus Christ, and of being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

A little while ago this immortal mind had its vision bounded by the narrow circle of temporal objects; *now*, its ken embraces the vast extent of its immortal existence, with all the momentous realities of that unseen world whither it is hastening.—*Then*; oh! what a degradation! it was kindred to the beasts of the field!... *Now*; what an exaltation! we hope that it is allied to the spirits of the just made perfect; that it is elevated to communion with its God!

And, now, my brethren, will you deem my plea too urgent, when I call upon you to imitate the example of the Apostle of the Gentiles; when I solicit your sympathy for those who as truly sit in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death, as *those* did among whom Paul laboured; or as those *heathen* of the present day, to whom missionaries and bibles are sent? For the moral waste-ground

is alike desolate, whether it lies beneath an Asiatic or African sun, or whether it is found near at home, sadly contrasted with the gospel verdure which surrounds it.

Paul was constrained to preach to those among whom Christ *had not been named*. Oh! aid us, then, while we long to make the same Name precious to the Deaf and Dumb.

Is encouragement needed in so generous a work? Let me present to your view the same sources of support which animated the efforts of the Apostle,—I mean the encouragement of prophecy.

“But, as it is written, to whom he was not spoken of they *shall* see; and they that have not heard *shall* understand.”

The fulness of prophecy stamps it with the character of Divinity. Stretching, as it does, through a long line of events, and embracing, within its scope, not only the immediate transaction to which it more directly referred, but those remote occurrences which are unfolded in the progress of God’s providential dispensations; it eludes in its developement the keenest conjectures of the mortal who ventures too rashly to explore all its secret premonitions; while in its wonderful accomplishments, so obvious and striking when they have actually taken place, it demonstrates that it could not have sprung from any other source than the Omniscient Mind.

Thus many of the psalms which alluded more immediately to the mighty monarch who penned them and his illustrious son, have been seen to have a more important reference to

One mightier than David, and more illustrious than Solomon.

Thus our Saviour's woful denunciation of ruin against the magnificent city which witnessed His ministry, and sufferings, and death, bears also, with portentous presage, upon the goodly structure of the whole visible creation, whose final catastrophe is to be more terrible than the awful overthrow of Jerusalem.

And thus, we may suppose, the same prophecy which Paul took up as the support of his labors among the Gentiles, looked forward to events which are now passing before our eyes; and which are yet to pass, until all the inspired predictions shall have received their full and glorious accomplishment. For, if Isaiah, from whose writings the words of my text were originally taken, had spread before his illuminated vision the Gentiles of Paul's time, why may we not reasonably conclude that, the Gentiles, the *heathen* of our day, were also included in his cheering predictions? And as a portion of these heathen, is it too bold an inference to suppose that he alluded to the Deaf and Dumb?

"But, as it is written, to whom he was not *spoken of*, they shall see, and they that have not *heard* shall understand."

I wish, therefore, my brethren, while pleading the cause of the Deaf and Dumb, to call forth your charity in their behalf from the most exalted and encouraging of all motives;—that in aiding them you are but carrying into effect the will of God; that you are co-operating with Him; and that He is pledged

to crown your labour with success, inasmuch as His own prophecy cannot otherwise receive its accomplishment.

And it is *already* receiving its accomplishment. I do not exaggerate the truth, when I say, that they already begin to see, to whom he was not spoken of; that they somewhat understand, who have not heard. For it is a most singular trait of the language of gestures and signs, that it is sufficiently significant and copious to admit of an application even to the most abstract, intellectual, moral, and religious truth. On this point I was once myself sceptical; but doubt has yielded to actual observation of the fact; and incredulity can no longer urge its scruples among those who have become familiar with the Deaf and Dumb. Were the occasion a proper one, I should not deem it a difficult task to satisfy you, upon the acknowledged principles of the philosophy of the human mind, that there is no more intrinsic or necessary connexion between *ideas of whatever kind*, and *audible or written language*, than between the same ideas, and the *language of signs and gestures*; and that the latter has even one advantage over the former, inasmuch as it possesses a power of analogical and symbolical description which can never belong to any combination of purely *arbitrary* sounds and letters. But I choose the rather to place it on the more safe and palpable ground of observation, and of fact.— No one who has conversed with *the intelli-

* Mr. Laurent Clerc, a native of France; a distinguished pupil of the Abbe Sicard, and for many years an assistant in the school of his illustrious master at Paris, and now one of the instructors in the Asylum at Hartford.

gent laborer in this novel department of education, himself born deaf and dumb ; no one who has witnessed the almost magical facility with which he conveys, by his own expressive language of signs, truths the most difficult and abstract, to his companions in misfortune ; no one who has observed the ingenious, and often subtle inquiries which they are prompt to make on the various subjects which have been communicated to their minds ; can withhold his assent from the acknowledgement of the position, that all important, intellectual and religious truth may be taught them by the language of signs, and even before they are capable of reading and understanding ours.

Do not suggest then, my brethren, that I call you to lavish your efforts upon a fruitless and unpromising soil.—It has long indeed been overrun with the thorns and briers of ignorance ; but help us to plant and to water, and under the blessing of Him who giveth the increase, it shall become like the garden of God, and put forth blossoms, and bear fruit, which may yet flourish with immortal beauty in the Paradise above.

And, while we would thus endeavor to prepare the Deaf and Dumb for a better world, we will not neglect the means of making them happy and useful in the present life. How many of their hours are now consumed by a torpid indolence, and vacuity of thought ! How cheerless is their perpetual solitude ! How are they shorn off from the fellowship of man ! How ignorant are they of many of the common transactions of life ! How unable are they to

rank even with the most illiterate of their fellow men ! How inaccessible to them are all the stores of knowledge and comfort which books contain ! How great a burthen do they often prove to their parents and friends ! How apt are they to be regarded by the passing glance of curiosity as little elevated above the idiot or the beast of the field !

We would soothe and cheer these lonely, forsaken and hapless beings. We would give them the enjoyment which active industry always affords. We would teach their judgment to distinguish, their imagination to portray, and their memory to retain, the various objects which the boundless stores of human and divine knowledge present to their view. We would make some of them capable of engaging in useful mechanical employments ; others of holding respectable stations in private and public spheres of commercial transactions ; and those who discover a genius and taste for such pursuits, of cultivating the fine arts ; and all, of thus becoming valuable members of society ; of contributing to the common stock of happiness ; and of gaining a livelihood by their own personal exertions. We would introduce them to the delights of social intercourse ; to a participation of the privileges of freemen ; to the dignity of citizens of a flourishing and happy community : we would furnish them with one of the highest solaces of retirement, that which may be drawn from the fountains of Science and Literature ; and books should supply them with a perpetual source of instruction and delight ; gladdening many an hour of solitude which is now filled up only with indolence or anxiety. We would render them a

comfort to their friends ; and the prop of the declining years of those who have hitherto only bemoaned the sad continuance of their condition without any hope of relief. We would shield them against contumely ; and almost render them no longer the objects even of condolence and pity. Thus they would soon have a common cause of gratitude with us, for all the temporal blessings which Providence sheds down upon this vale of tears.

And how would the feeble powers of him who thus attempts to plead before you the cause of the Deaf and Dumb, yield in efficacy to the sight of these children of suffering, could I but place them before your eyes. Then I would make no appeal to your sympathy. I would only afford it an opportunity of having full scope, by the interesting and affecting spectacle which would excite it. I would point you to the man of mature age ; to the blooming youth ; and to the tender child ; all eager to gather a few sheaves from that abundant harvest of knowledge, with which a kinder Providence has blessed you. I would explain to you, if indeed Nature did not speak a language too forcible to need explanation, the lamentation of one bemoaning the long lapse of years which had rolled by him without furnishing one ray of knowledge or of hope with regard to his immortal destiny. I would bid you mark the intense and eager look of another, who was just catching the first rudiments of religious truth. And your tears should mingle with theirs who would be seen sympathising, in the fulness of a refined and susceptible imagination, with the anguish of the venerable patriarch about to sacrifice his son ; or

the grief of the tender Joseph sold by his unrelenting brethren ; or the agonies of Him, who bled to redeem both you and them from sin, and sorrow, and suffering.

Yes, the Deaf and Dumb would plead their own cause best. But they cannot do it. Their lip is sealed in eternal silence. They are scattered in lonely solitude throughout our land. They have excited but little compassion ; *for uncomplaining sorrow, in our cold-hearted world, it apt to be neglected.* Now, they see some dawning of hope. They venture therefore to ask aid from those who extend their generous charities to other objects of compassion ; and crave, that they may not be quite overlooked amid the noble exertions that are making, it is to be hoped in the spirit, and with the zeal, of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, to fulfil the animating prophecy ; that “ to whom he was not spoken of they shall see ; and they that have not heard shall understand.”

And can you wish, my brethren, for a sweeter recollection to refresh the slumbers of your nightly pillow, or the declining moments of a short and weary life ;—than to think, that you have succoured these children of misfortune, who look to you for the means of being delivered from a bondage more galling than that of the slave ; from an ignorance more dreadful than that of the wild and untutored savage !! One tear of gratitude, glistening in the eye of these objects of your pity ; one smile of thankfulness, illuminating their countenance, would be a rich recompense for all you should do for them. To think that you had contributed to rescue an intelligent, susceptible, and immortal mind, as it were, from non-existence ; that

you had imitated that Saviour who went about doing good ; that you had solaced the aching bosom of parental love ; that you had introduced a fellow-being to those enjoyments of society in which you so richly participate ; to the charms of books which had cheered so many of your hours of solitude ; and to the contemplation of those sublime and affecting truths of religion, which you profess to make the foundation of your dearest hopes,—will not this be a more grateful theme of remembrance, than to look back upon the wasted delights amid which Pleasure has wantoned ; the crumbling possessions for which Avarice has toiled, or the fading honours for which Ambition has struggled ! *These*, fascinating as they may be to the eye of youthful hope ; or bewildering as they do the dreams of our too sanguine imagination, soon pass away, like the brilliancy of the morning cloud, or the sparkling of the early dew. The *other* will be as immortal as the mind ; it will abide the scrutiny of conscience ; it will endure the test of that day of awful retribution, when standing, as we all must, at the bar of our final Judge, He will greet, with the plaudit of his gracious benediction, those who have given even a cup of cold water, in His name, to the meanest of his disciples ; to the least of *these little ones*, whom His mysterious providence has cast upon our care.

May such an imitation of His example, in the spirit of His gospel, be to each of us the surest pledge, that we are truly His disciples ; and that we are meet for the inheritance of *that kingdom*, where there will be no more sin to bemoan, or suffering to relieve. Amen.